

Presence of *Syneches muscarius* (Fabricius) (Diptera: Hybotidae) in the Test and Itchen Valleys in Hampshire.—This very distinctive empid with broad strongly maculated wings and bright red holoptic eyes contrasting with the black body in both sexes, was until recently known in the British Isles only from Dorset where it was first found in peaty meadows near Wool (Collin, 1961 and subsequent collectors) and then from Turner's Puddle Meadows where Alan Stubbs found it to be frequent in a grazed peaty field on 4.vii.1984. More recent experience of the species began at Winnall Moor, a local nature reserve in Hants during a Diptera Recording Scheme field meeting on 25.vi.1989. It was discovered in the cattle-grazed fields at the northern end of this fenland reserve by the River Itchen just outside Winchester, by Peter Grainger who brought it to the attention of the others present. It was then found in numbers by Alan Stubbs and myself, mostly concentrated around small water-filled depressions in these meadows but also by general sweeping of the open herbaceous vegetation.

This site was investigated intensively during the week long Diptera Recording Schemes meeting at Winchester in July 1990, when *S. muscarius* was found in very much larger numbers in this same area, providing the opportunity for all those attending the meeting who were interested in empids to observe the species. It was evidently restricted to several adjoining cattle grazed fields but apparently absent from the ungrazed fen areas at the south end of the Reserve.

During an evening visit on 12.vii., when I was accompanied by Ken Merrifield who was able to photograph the species, large numbers of *Syneches* were in flight about 2–4 metres above the ground, forming rather loose aggregations rather than discrete swarms, possibly due to the very great numbers present. Some were observed on vegetation with prey, including Chironomidae and a *Geomyza* species (Opomyzidae).

Investigation of some other sites in the Itchen Valley was repaid on 14.vii., when I swept a few *S. muscarius* from fen vegetation at the edge of lightly grazed water meadows near Ovington.

Then, on 26.vii.1990, I visited Chilbolton Common, another floristically rich cattle grazed area by the River Test and was able to find one male of *muscarius*, presumably now near the end of its flying season, by sweeping low vegetation.

This latter record is of interest both because of the similarity of the site to those in the Itchen Valley and its proximity to the Leckford Estate. The latter area has been extensively surveyed for Diptera, mainly by Alan Stubbs and myself, for over 20 years and *Syneches* has never been found there. However, grazed water meadows are of limited extent on the estate where ungrazed fen and carr predominate in the valley, although many of these areas have been water meadows in the past and we have not given much attention to the grazed fen areas of the estate during the summer.

Further searching of other sites in these and other comparable valleys would be desirable to determine whether *S. muscarius* has a wider distribution. Its abundance at Winnall Moor should enable future work on its biology to be carried out there as its early stages and precise habitat requirements remain unknown. According to Chvála (1983) it is widespread in central and southern Europe and rather common in wet meadows, but it does not occur in northern Europe so its restricted southern distribution in Britain may be due to it being on the edge of its range here. *S. muscarius* is the only European species of a large tropical and southern hemisphere genus.—P. J. Chandler, Weston Research Laboratories, Vanwall Road, Maidenhead, Berkshire SL6 4UF.

REFERENCES

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